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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAMA 000158

SIPDIS

STATE FOR T, NEA/ARPI

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#) [IR](#) [KICC](#)

SUBJECT: U/S BOLTON PRESSES FOR MOVING IRAN NUCLEAR ISSUE
TO SECURITY COUNCIL, ARTICLE 98 RATIFICATION

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Under Secretary Bolton January 30 met with Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed, Defense Minister Shaikh Khalifa, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abdul Ghaffar to discuss Iran's nuclear program and bringing into force the bilateral Article 98 agreement. In response to U/S Bolton's presentation on Iran, Shaikh Mohammed agreed that the matter is very serious and important, and said that Bahrain supported keeping the issue in the IAEA for now. Public opinion required that the GOB allow the IAEA to take the lead until there is a decision to move the issue to the UN Security Council. Noting that Bahrain currently chairs the GCC, he offered to coordinate a GCC statement on Iran, if the U.S. thought it would be helpful. MinDef Shaikh Khalifa said that Bahrain recognizes the Iranian threat and estimates that Iran is 3-5 years away from acquiring nuclear weapons. The focus of international efforts must be on stopping Iran's program, preferably by means other than military force. On Article 98, Shaikh Mohammed asserted that Bahrain would continue to protect Americans in Bahrain, and the GOB was considering the best way to bring the agreement into force. The government was still developing a relationship with parliament, which was reconstituted only two years ago, and the parameters for concluding executive agreements vice parliamentary ratification were not yet clear. End Summary.

Iranian Strategic Decision to Acquire Nuclear Weapons

2. (C) Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Bolton, accompanied by T Senior Advisor Timbie, opened his January 30 meetings with Foreign Minister/Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Defense Minister General Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs/Information Minister Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar by briefing them on U.S. concerns related to Iran's nuclear program. He asserted that we are opposed to Iran getting a nuclear capacity, and we believe that Iran made a strategic decision to acquire nuclear weapons and the ballistic missiles to carry them. The UN Security Council is the proper forum for dealing with Iran, and U/S Bolton passed the Bahraini officials a paper on options for dealing with Iran in the UNSC. The EU-3 fully agree with our assessment of Iran's nuclear program but believe they can bring about a change in Iranian behavior through negotiations. The EU-3 and Iran are far apart on the central issue of cessation of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle efforts, so the negotiations may well not succeed. This is not just a confrontation between Iran and the U.S.; rather, it is between Iran and the rest of the world. The United States' overwhelming preference is to reach a negotiated solution but, though we have no military plans now, we have taken no option off the table.

ForMin: IAEA Responsible for Iranian Nuclear File

3. (C) ForMin Shaikh Mohammed agreed that this is a very serious and important issue. Saying that Iran is "next door," he stated that the international community must convince Iran not to proceed with its nuclear program. He noted that he had raised this issue during his August 2004 visit to Iran, and his interlocutors insisted Iran is not developing nuclear weapons.

4. (C) Shaikh Mohammed said that the IAEA should be in charge of the Iran nuclear file. It is the organization responsible for nuclear matters, and Bahraini public opinion would only support the IAEA taking the lead. The GOB supports the United States and will agree to move the issue to the UNSC if necessary. But the IAEA should be given the chance to see through its investigation. Bahrain currently is chair of the GCC, and the GOB could coordinate a GCC statement on Iran based upon the IAEA position, if the U.S.

considered this to be helpful.

15. (C) U/S Bolton said that the United States continues to work with the IAEA, but is concerned that Iran, in its submissions to the agency, has not dealt with many of the outstanding questions. (Note: Senior Advisor Timbie passed the list of unanswered questions to an MFA official attending the meeting. End Note) Iran has made concessions at the IAEA in response to the U.S. threat to take the issue to the UNSC.

MinDef: Iran 3-5 Years from Acquiring Weapons

16. (C) Defense Minister Shaikh Khalifa told U/S Bolton that Bahrain recognizes the Iranian military and terrorist threat. The Iranian Ambassador told Shaikh Khalifa just a few weeks earlier that the Iranian nuclear program is for peaceful purposes and requested the support of regional countries. However, the GCC issued a statement opposing the program. Bahrain estimates that Iran is 3-5 years away from developing nuclear weapons. The focus of international efforts must be on stopping Iran's program. The question is the means, and using military force should be the last option.

17. (C) Shaikh Khalifa noted that a strike against the Bushehr reactor would have environmental, political, and military consequences for the countries of the region. A solution coming as a result of negotiations or even sanctions would be the best outcome for the region. The United States should be careful and calculate all the risks involved. Bahrain supports the U.S., but it cannot apply heat or threaten Iran because it is a small country.

18. (C) In response to the MinDef's question, U/S Bolton said that the government of Pakistan had provided some information on the A.Q. Khan network. While we know that he passed weapons design information to Libya, we do not know if he did so to Iran. He said that Pakistan, along with other OIC members Algeria, Tunisia, and Yemen, are on the IAEA board, and we encourage Bahrain to encourage them to support moving the Iran nuclear issue to the UNSC. There, the heat and the spotlight would be firmly on Iran. Additionally, Russia would see the issue in a new light. Currently, it acts as a supplier of nuclear technology. But in the UNSC, it would have to act as a member of the P-5, with a different set of interests. Shaikh Khalifa noted that the Iranian ambassador had told him that all Iranian universities were now involved in the development of high tech systems, so Iran may not need to rely upon technology from outside sources.

Abdul Ghaffar Supports IAEA Lead

19. (C) Minister of State Abdul Ghaffar agreed that it is very important to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Concurring with U/S Bolton's statement, he said that in order to prevent Iran from portraying the conflict as Iran-U.S. rather than Iran and the rest of the world, the international community should work the issue through the IAEA. U/S Bolton noted that Iran had not allowed the IAEA to inspect all the places it wanted to see, in particular certain military sites that we believe are centers for weapons development. He related that at one site in Iran, the IAEA had found several feet of soil cleared away, thus preventing the agency from checking for the presence of uranium.

Activating Article 98 Agreement

10. (C) Turning to Article 98, U/S Bolton stated that we have signed 97 agreements worldwide, 87 of which had entered into force. Unfortunately, Bahrain is one of the 10 that had signed but not activated the agreement. He noted that there were two ways to bring the agreement into force: by parliamentary ratification, and by a legally binding agreement between the executive branches of the two countries. The United States did not need to obtain congressional ratification and was willing and able to activate the agreement with Bahrain via an exchange of diplomatic notes.

11. (C) Foreign Minister Shaikh Mohammed assured U/S Bolton that the GOB would continue to protect Americans in Bahrain, as it had done for over 50 years. He said that the GOB would respect its signing of the agreement. The government was determining the right timing to push the agreement forward to parliament. Currently, the GOB put priority on gaining parliamentary ratification of the free trade agreement, and did not want to jeopardize this ratification by also submitting the Article 98 agreement.

12. (C) U/S Bolton indicated that two-thirds of all the

Article 98 agreements had entered into force via diplomatic notes rather than parliamentary ratification, and asked whether this was the better route to use. Shaikh Mohammed replied that the GOB was "at the beginning" of its relationship with parliament, which had been reconstituted only two years ago. The government would first need to reach agreement with parliament about what comprises an executive agreement, vice treaty, before it took this route to activate Article 98. MinDef Shaikh Khalifa told U/S Bolton that finalizing the agreement was a domestic political issue that the government was working on.

113. (U) Under Secretary Bolton cleared this message.

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